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THE
Christian Free-Thinker.

OR AN
EPISTOLARY DISCOURSE
CONCERNING
FREEDOM of THOUGHT.

In which are contained
Observations on the LIVES and WRITINGS
of *Epicurus, Lucretius, Petronius, Car-*
dan, Bruno, Vanini, and Spinoza.

*Put your Neck under the Yoke, and let your
Soul receive Instruction, she is hard at
hand to find.* Ecclesiast.

*Virtus est vitium fugere : & sapientia prima,
Stultitia caruisse.* Horat. Epist.

*De partibus vitæ omnes deliberamus : de toto
nemo deliberat.* Senec.

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CHRISTIAN FREE-THINKER
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EPISTOLARY DISCOURSE
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FREEDOM OF THOUGHT.

Collected by J. J. and W. J. J.
of the Christian Free-Thinker,
and published by J. J. and W. J. J.

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at the Christian Free-Thinker,
and published by J. J. and W. J. J.
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TO THE
Right Reverend Father in God
T H O M A S,
Lord Bishop of *Salisbury*.

THAT I should endeavour to shelter these few Sheets under the Protection of so great a Name, can appear strange to none who considers your Lordship's Station, and the Subject on which they are written. A *Christian* Free-Thinker could not possibly choose a more proper Patron than a *Christian* Bishop.

BUT, my Lord, these Pages belong to you by another Right. If there is any thing in them not altogether unworthy of their Title, it is

owing to your Lordship's Writings, and to those of your excellent Father. By the reading of them this came to be written, and on its going to the Perss I thought this Acknowledgment due.

If your Lordship hath the goodness to pardon this Presumption, and to accept this Trifle, as it is said, a *Persian* Monarch once did a Cup of cold Water, because he who presented it, had nothing better to give, the Favour will be ever gratefully acknowledged by

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most faithful,

Most Humble, and

Most Obedient Servant,

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.

THE Design of this Work, is so plainly shewn in the opening thereof, that I should not have troubled the Reader in this manner, were it not to inform him of a few Particulars which nearly concern me, and will not prove absolutely useless to him.

The Reason why this Discourse is not embroidred with Citations, tho' many Authorities are mentioned, is because it was Originally a Letter, and the Person to whom it was directed, knew very well where to have recourse to whatsoever is referred to, therein: And the Author thought it would savor of Affectation, if in preparing it for the Press, he had
swelled

swelled so short a Treatise into a considerable Bulk, by stuffing it with Quotations.

As for the Second Part, promised at the Close of this, it will be of the same Size, and shall appear, if the Publick approves the first. I might naturally say somewhat as to the excusable Negligences in this free way of writing, but English Criticks, like an English Jury, are of so Humane a Disposition, that where a Man hath a good Cause, he needs not be afraid, even though there should be some Errors in his Management. In the Confidence of this, I committed these Papers to the Press, and shall remain perfectly satisfied, whatever Reception they meet with.

T H E



T H E
Christian Free-Thinker.

IT was altogether without Ground *Aristo*, that you conceived I was angry with you, on account of what some of your Fellow-Students reported of you, *viz.* that you inclin'd to Free-thinking. This inclination of yours, must appear to me, either well directed, or not : If the former, then ought I to rejoice ; if the latter, to undertake the disabusing you. We all pursue Good, real, or apparent. To mistake in this daily, is incident to our Nature ; but to persist in it, is a Crime indeed. It is disavowing our Reason, quitting our Rank in the Scale of Being, and degrading ourselves, so as to stand on the level with the Beasts which perish. But be this far from a Free-Thinker ! He improves even the richest Talents, and striking out of the vulgar Track of Mankind, rises

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while on this side the Grave, into a state of superiour, if not infinite Knowledge. Thence he looks down, not with Contempt, but Pity, on his Fellow-Creatures, who jogg on in the beaten Road, and are content, (O mean-spirited Mortals!) to be no wiser than their Fore-fathers, to follow as their spiritual Guides lead the way, and believe or pretend to believe what they acknowledge to be inexplicable by Reason.

SUCH a masculine System as this, will always have many Followers. Amongst Gamesters, all would be, I won't say Sharpers if they could, but vers'd in the Arts of Sharping, and so it is in Life. No Man cares to be or to be thought a Bubble. He had rather be suspected of knowing too much than look'd on as One who knows but little. Free-thinking is getting behind the Scenes and entering into the Springs of Action, so that while the *Many* are admiring the Play of Life, or at least are amus'd therewith, the judicious Free-thinkers in the Green Room laugh at their Sentiments, and are not a little pleas'd that they alone are in the secret, so as not to be struck with surprize at any thing, or to have their Understandings over-ruled by Appearances ever so great or solemn. That Notions like these should prevail among many who think, corresponds with Reason: But that young Men should of all others receive them

them most eagerly, depends on Nature. In Youth our Body is most vigorous, and so too our Minds are most enterprizing. In the Field we delight in Hunting, Cricket, or pitching the Bar; in our Closets the same Taste prevails, we ridicule, censure, and raise new Systems: In fine, Exercise hath the Name, but Victory and Fame are what we seek.

You see how little you have to fear from me, *Aristo*, since you see I practise Free-thinking myself. But come, young Man, let us exercise ourselves more closely. I am told you define Free-thinking 'an unconfined Exercise of the Faculties of the Soul, in the investigation of all such Truths as seem to merit her Inquiry. I shall offer nothing against this Definition, which certainly expresses the kind of Free-thinking to which you are addicted. But taking it for a Rule, let us examine a little how it quadrates with what is and has been in the World. We may frame Systems, but alas! *Aristo*, we cannot frame Worlds. Nay we can alter nothing we find in this. We must contentedly take all things as they stand, and not fancy that because they do not happen to please us, therefore they are not right. We must in the same manner compare our Notions with the Subjects to which they relate, and from the consistency or inconsistency perceivable on the Comparison approve or disapprove them.

This, I say, we must do as rational Creatures, in order to come at Truth, without which we cannot enjoy Peace, as void of that Life itself must be an intolerable Burthen.

LET us think then, and if you will, let us think on some important Subjects? But let it be with freedom, let us forget all our Prejudices? Let us banish from our Thoughts all our received Opinions? And resolve to take up such new ones as Nature and Reason dictate? This sure is fair, and according to your Scheme of Philosophizing. What say you to Superstition and Priestcraft? I promise you there is not a Free-thinker breathing that detests them more than I. But let me not talk, as if I hated Words, or could be in a passion with Sounds. Mobs, I know, have thus been wrought upon, and I have been acquainted with some Persons of Distinction, who were notwithstanding, a little, or to speak out, not a little Mobbish in this particular. Some of them I have seen transported at the Word Church, who nevertheless seldom entered the Edifice so called; and others, who never heard Liberty pronounced without falling into a Rapture, who, yet were in their Families Tyrants to the last degree. But this is no way my case, as to Superstition and Priestcraft. I know the very Letters terrify some People, but 'tis the Idea's these Words excite, which are disagreeable
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to me. I hope I express myself to your liking. But to be more explicite still.

SUPERSTITION, as I understand it, is the Effect of a false and groundless Notion of the Divine Power, imprinting Terror on the Mind, and so begetting at best but a slavish Obedience, which too often is irrational. Priestcraft, again, is in my Judgment, that fraudulent Art, by which the Impious propagate Superstition, among the unwary, and frequently lead Men into desperate acts of Wickedness, while they make a semblance of instructing them in super-eminent Piety. These, *Aristo*, are my Sentiments, and I am in a manner confident they are yours too. In consequence of these, we must hate Superstition and Priestcraft, because they appear of an odious Nature, destructive of the rational Happiness of Man, and detracting from those Notions, which right Reason teaches us to form of God.

SUPPOSE now we were to look for the Origin of these Evils, for it must be owned Superstition and Priestcraft are of ancient date, where do you think we should find them? *Diodorus Siculus* (of more authority with some folks than the Bible) tells us in *Egypt*, and in the Country of *Babylon*. His two first Books contain a copious History of the Theological and Philosophical Doctrines, that is, of the Superstition and Priestcraft of those

those famous Nations. In regard to the *Egyptians*, he tells us fairly their Religion was invented, and the Inventors were their Priests. As to the *Chaldeans*, whom he makes *Babylonian* Priests, he writes very knowingly concerning their astrological System, which is evidently fictitious, absurd, and calculated purely to keep the People in blind Subjection and Slavery. I need not run through Particulars, because you cannot but be well acquainted with them. All eminent Free-thinkers begin with studying these Systems, and having thoroughly acquainted themselves with their *Foibles*, transfer the Arguments with which they have effectually batter'd them to play upon Religions of later date.

YET consider *Aristo*, consider I say, what gave birth to these Systems? Was it not the unconfined Wit of Man? If these Religions had come from God they would have been consistent and uniform. But they were not so. The *Egyptians* asserted (according to my Author) that the World was made in time. The *Chaldeans*, that it, nay and Mankind too existed, from all Eternity. These Systems then were indubitably the product of Human Invention, of Thoughts unconfined, or to speak out, of Free-thinking. Nay, don't be surprized, it must necessarily be so, for many Reasons. Superstition is an unreasonable Terror arising from a false Idea
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of the Divine Nature. This cannot come from God, he is the father and fountain of Truth; it springs therefore from Man, and not from restrain'd or narrow thinking, but from a boundless desire of transgressing all limits, and a resolution of feigning new and unexisting Worlds, that is, framing them in Idea rather than own a deficiency in Understanding, and a want of Power to comprehend the things which are. Now the Contrivers of all such Systems are truly and properly Priests to Gods of their own making, and the Art and Invention shewn in these contrivances is without question Priestcraft. See my Friend how oddly, and yet how plainly it appears, that those Opinions, which it is said, Free-thinking would extrude, are in fact the fruits of Free-thinking.

THAT it may fully appear there is nothing in this of Affectation or of Declaiming, let me put you in mind of *Lucretius*, the Laureat of Free-Thinkers. What is it he attempts to recommend himself by to his Patron *Memmius*, and all the bright Wits of succeeding Ages? What I say, but the delivering them from the apprehensions of fiery Lakes, of avenging Furies, and all the Terrors of the *Pagan* Hell? What is it for which after degrading the Poetical Gods, he would deify *Epicurus*, but for the furnishing him with the means of doing this? Yet weigh
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the matter *Aristo*, think with yourself in what sense *Lucretius* and his followers are to be understood. Will you restrain them to the Hell of *Homer* and the Poets? Let them destroy it, tho' I don't see how their Arguments will do even that. But granting they could, what would this be more than pulling down by Free-thinking, what Free-thinking had set up? The rest of the World have nothing to do with these Squabbles. The Poets, who have the freest Thoughts of any Men, adorn the gloomy Subject of Eternal Misery with horrible Descriptions. These pass on the Vulgar, when at the Mercy of Free-Thinkers, for Facts. Then come the Philosophers, and in consequence of their Inquiries, demolish the Poets Structure. We are at last but where we were, and the amount of all this is no more, than that One Body of Wits, after a brisk Engagement defeated another, made themselves masters of their Works, and levell'd their Intrenchments.

BUT you know as well as I, that this is carried farther. *Lucretius* does not only deride the Poetical Hell, which is of Human Invention; but argues also against the possibility of a future State. Now this is quite another Question, for a future State is neither an invention of Poets, or of any other Free-thinkers; nor is it a Truth discoverable by
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Free-thinking, otherwise *Socrates* would have been clearer in it. But it is a Truth received another way, and therefore Free-thinking hath no Power over it. For observe, my Friend, how *Epicurus* and *Lucretius* manage the Business. First of all, they tell us of eternal Atoms in eternal Motion. Then they tell us of the *Clinamen*, a Motion contrary to the Laws of Motion. From Matter and Motion thus compounded, they derive all Things — and leave us nothing to object, but Reason and Experience, neither of which hath any thing to do with their System. If after this Explication, we will implicitly receive their Philosophical Romance, we may, like other Admirers of Romances, delight ourselves with Fables, and admire varnish'd Ignorance, instead of naked Truth. Put the fine Verses of *Lucretius* into plain *English*, this is their meaning. Gentlemen, you are doubtful as to Liberties you may take here, for fear of what may happen hereafter. You must know, that all you have been told of hereafter, deserves no credit; 'tis meer Priestcraft. But you may safely rely upon what I say, because I am no Priest —, I am only a Poet —. Moreover here's a new Creed for you. Matter in Motion produces all things, dissolves all things, and so destroys all things. While you are here, you are something; when you

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die,

die, you may become another something; which because it is another something, hath nothing to do with the first something —. Do but believe this, and you're safe —. Unless I am mistaken ———. Will a Free-Thinker swallow this? No, surely. The Dreams of Poets may amuse, the Boldness of Philosophers may amaze, but neither ought to deceive us.

WHEN I was speaking to you of the *Chaldean* System, I attributed it to Priestcraft, and founded my Proofs on the Falshoods, Absurdities, and contradictory Suppositions attending that Philosophical Hypothesis. But *Aristo*, was there ever a Religion cumbered with such unintelligible Mysteries, such apparent Absurdities, such palpable Inconsistencies, as are in the *Epicurean* Scheme? — How in the name of wonder (if it was true) could *Epicurus*, or *Democritus*, for I am not ignorant of his being the true Author of these Opinions; how, I say, came either of these Men by this Knowledge? Inspiration they ridicule, and therefore should they in this Case pretend to it, they must become themselves ridiculous; and if they had not by Inspiration a certain Knowledge of what passed in the Beginning, then all their fine-spun Hypothesis is pure Invention on their own shewing, and very bungling Invention too on the face of the thing. To believe, say they,

they, sulphureous Lakes, tormenting Furies, *Pluto*, *Minos*, *Rhadamantus*, and such Stuff, is to believe Dreams and Fables; but admitting this so to be, must we believe against Reason, Atoms declining in their descent through a Void without any impress'd Force? Must we, against Experience, admit that all Natural Things were made at a Venture, when these things visibly exceed all Works of Art; or, in a word, must we allow that Chance heretofore made the Universe, though now-a-days it never makes so much as a Joint-Stool? And all this, because neither *Democritus*, nor *Epicurus* were Priests? No, no, their own Arguments over-throw their System; they who sneer at others Authority, destroy their own. The Poets Hell, is not, cannot, be an idler Dream, than *Lucretius's* Atoms, however adorn'd by the brightness of his Genius. His Scheme manifests freedom of Thought, but can never give satisfaction of Mind to any reasonable Inquirer. The hammering out this System, cost the Poet, Time, Pains, and Thought, and could the World be made at an easier Rate? Who can believe it? Doubt not *Aristo*, that what I offer to your view is founded in Truth and Reason. Free-thinking raiseth Structures in one Age, which are ruined by Free-thinking in the next; this

leads me to another Topick, the Restlessness of Free-Thinkers.

I would by no means have you imagine, that under this Head, I intend to place any contumelious Reflections on this Sect, as if I look'd on them in the light of wavering, uneasy, and irresolute Persons, in consequence of a wrong turn of Mind, deficiency in Understanding, or imbecillity of Judgment: quite the contrary; I have all the regard for Free-Thinkers they deserve; and what I design to insist on is the natural Tendency of their Opinions, which, as I apprehend induces that Restlessness, and those quick Revolutions in Sentiment, which seem inherent to every Free-Thinker. I know very well, that Steadiness, Resolution, and fix'd regard to Principles, are what many Free-Thinkers claim, and I should be glad their Claim was as well founded, as it is loudly asserted; but if you will attend to your own Definition, if you will throw aside all Biases in favour of Opinions anciently, or lately taken up; in fine, if you will think as freely as you profess to think, then I despair not of making what I assert, as clear to you, as it appears to me. Give me leave to add farther, this seems to be a Point of great Importance to the Tranquillity of the Human Mind, and therefore on your own Principles,

Principles, you are bound to examine it thoroughly.

THE very Notion of Free-thinking, as it is received by you and your Brethren, excludes any immovable Principle, or any invariable Rule for regulating your Speculations. It is (if I conceive right) to exclude this, that you so tenaciously adhere to the Adjective *free*, which in your case can signify nothing particularly, and in a strict and proper relation to your System, if it does not absolutely signify an utter exclusion of all fix'd Rules whatsoever. This is a Thing which I state in pure regard to Truth, and therefore shall readily own I think this reasonable, according to your Scheme. For since in Opposition to the Vulgar, you give no heed to what any *Numa's* report on the Credit of their *Egeria's*, I see no cause why you should pay that Respect to any Man's Reason, which you refuse to Revelation, or why you should idolize Opinion after rejecting Faith. To me, I say, this seems just and well founded; but then, let me beseech you to fix your Eyes upon its consequences, not such as are imputed to Free-thinking by its express Enemies, but such as are natural and unavoidable, such as are owned, and confessed by Free-Thinkers themselves.

HUMAN Reason varies extreamly. What appears convincing to one, seems but trivial to

to another, and what this Man apprehends to be of the highest Importance, to that appears a thing of no Moment at all. A System vehemently supported by its Votaries, is with equal violence decry'd by those who oppose it, and thus Incertainty prevails more among the thinking, than among the unthinking part of Mankind. The latter are pleased and satisfied in consequence of their want of Curiosity; the former restless and unquiet, because they would comprehend all things. I do not offer this in favour of Ignorance, for it is far from being my Opinion, that because Men advert not to their Misery, therefore they are happy. But I speak of it as a Proof that Indolence is not so tormenting as fruitless Inquiries, which I conceive is so plain, that it will not be denied me.

It must however be allow'd, that to Men of superiour Judgments, the living blindfold, as it were, in the World, and having no adequate Conceptions of our Being, our Duties, and the Duration of our Existence, is insupportable. For this cause Men of Abilities have in all Ages exercised their Thoughts on these Subjects, as those most elevated and sublime in their Nature, and at the same time to themselves, of nearest and greatest Importance. In consequence of this, they have indulged their Thoughts
freely

freely in examining themselves, their Fellow-Creatures, and all the Animal, Vegetative, and Mineral Kingdoms, not fearing afterwards to scale the Heavens, and to borrow an expression of the Poets, born on the towering Wings of Thoughts sublime, to pass the flaming Limits of the World. Hence the variety of Conjectures concerning the Principle of the Universe, which some Wise-men, *i. e.* Free-Thinkers, held to be Fire, others Air, others Water, &c. Hence innumerable other Sentiments, as opposite in themselves maintain'd and impugned with equal Ingenuity. Hence that Eagerness, with which Philosophers prosecuted their Inquiries, and that Obstinacy, with which they defended what they published, as the Results of them. Yet take them out of their Schools, examine the ordinary Actions of their Lives, and weigh well their Expressions, when not disputing, you will find they seldom acted according to the Systems they espoused.

In order to account for this, we must consider, That the greatest Philosophers, as well as the meanest of Mortals, are subject to certain Infirmities of Mind, through indisposition of the Body, or through the hurry of the Passions. I do not mean by this, a casual interruption of Reason, but a warping it for a continuance. The dogged Temper
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of *Diogenes*, strongly tinctured his Doctrines, infomuch, that he imposed on others, as a mark of Wisdom, a Surliness he derived from Nature. *Socrates* inclined to Rallery, he gave this Talent therefore a Philosophical Turn, and by the Steadiness of his Head, corrected the Gall in his Stomach. In like measure other Free-Thinkers have been affected. A particular Disposition, a casual Disorder, an early Disappointment, and twenty other Causes influence even a Wise Man's Thoughts, and lead him either to the right or left. The Weather, the Seasons, the Vicissitudes of Life, all operate on the Understanding, and influence our most serious Thoughts. A sufficient Reason this, not only why Men do not think alike on all Subjects, but also why the same Man should alter his Sentiments on the same Head in different Times of Life. These, as they are general, so they are permanent Causes, which, as they have hitherto attended, so are they ever like to accompany Human Nature as Clogs and Ties, serving to put us in mind of our Mortality, and of our Vanity in fancying we transcend the rest of our Species, and by meer dint of Genius are able to exalt ourselves into a higher Scale of Beings.

A Paternal Fondness for our own Opinions, especially when ranged Methodically into a System, and a false Affectation of superior

perious Abilities in defending these Opinions, induces an excessive Blindness in point of Reason, while the Fit is upon us. But when the Fever of Philosophizing abates, when the Sound of the Enemies Voice is no longer in our Ears, then his Arguments appear in quite a new form; perhaps being surprized at this Change, we become prejudiced the other way, and take for Giants what we before thought Pigmies. It may happen that Self-Love still preserving the Ascendant, we may insincerely maintain, what at first we really believed, and so sacrifice our Honesty to our Ambition, A Sacrifice but too common in this World! but our Embarrassment will be increased, not diminished by this Conduct. It is in the first place, the way to heighten our inward Disquiet, for the more we constrain ourselves, the more we feel the Power which constrains us, And then, in the second place, the Mask is not easily kept on. Our Manners are almost as naturally affected by our Sentiments, as our Limbs by the Will operating on the Animal Spirits, or whatever else places the Nerves under its commands. For this Cause therefore we are obliged to keep a continual Guard on our Expressions, and our Actions, lest any spontaneous Motion should discover us, and speak us what we are, instead of what we would seem to be. A hard Task

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this,

this, to be a continual Spy upon Oneself. But a harder Task still, if we consider on whom it is imposed; a Man may easily dissemble a little, who wants a Dinner. But for a Person who thinks! For a Philosopher to walk in Disguise! For a Man of good Sense to act in constant Defiance thereof, is Labour indeed. A Labour hard to be born, and yet when its Hardship presses most, we are least inclined to avoid it. Time, as it makes us more uneasy, making us also judge it more necessary.

THERE is over and above all these another, and yet more important Reason for the Instability of Philosophick Judgments, and it is this. The Objects they consider are disproportionate to their Faculties. One Man may have much better Eye-sight than another. There are very extraordinary things told us in this particular, of the *Mosquitto Indians*, and of the Inhabitants of the *Bermudas* Islands. But still their Prospects are quickly bounded, though more extensive than ours. So it is as to the Capacities of Men. They may, to speak truth, they do differ exceedingly; but still all human Capacities are finite. They serve perfectly well for our daily Occasions, they enable us to feed ourselves properly, to provide warm Cloathing, to erect convenient Dwellings, and to form Societies for our own convenience,

ency, as well as safety. But when we push our Inquiries beyond useful Points, we acquire sometimes Notions we take for Knowledge, but in the end, they prove only Chimæra's. It is true, that Geography, Astronomy, Navigation, and many other Branches of Science, flatter Mens minds with the pleasing Ideas of universal Comprehension. But this arises from our own Vanity, from our fixing our Attention wholly on what we see, and neglecting what is hid from us, since in all these Arts, there are many things we know but imperfectly, and not a few, of which we know nothing at all. They are but Smatterers in Science, who boast of knowing. Such as have really studied with Success, see so wide a Difference between what they know, and what remains to be known, that they are modestly silent. But supposing these, and all other Sciences could be attained, and attained in Perfection by Mankind: How short do these fall of the Wisdom necessary to frame and govern the Universe? Yet to this, those who have reasoned in favour of unbounded Thought, have eagerly pretended, and expected as profound Submission, as if in reality they had been present when Nature was in Labour, and had seen all things in their first Forms. However, even to these, Doubts will occur. The Faces of the Planets, when viewed with Telescopes,

change often, and so do these Hypothetical Notions. For the Mind contemplating in one Light, sees grounds of Satisfaction; and yet when it examines the same Object in another, those Signs disappearing which were the Causes of Hope, and new Phenomena being discovered, in spite of all Prepossession, it perceives its own Weakness; and that utter Incapacity, it is under, of accounting for all the Works of infinite Wisdom, and infinite Power. Such is the Condition of Man, that while he employs his Reason for useful Purposes, he finds it a clear, strong, and every way sufficient Light. But when he endeavours to exceed his Sphere, when he would become more than Man, when he emulates the next Order of reasonable Beings, and seeks the Privilege of Angels, his Reason deceives him, he sickens like *Phaeton* at the Appearance of Celestial Light, and tumbling from on high, teaches, by his hapless Fall, more caution unto others.

It is very possible *Aristo*, that you may think of opposing to this way of reasoning Matters of Fact. Remember, however, that I took notice of the Claims made by Free-Thinkers, to Steadiness, Fortitude, and absolute Constancy; but what are Pretences, when opposed to Arguments? Yet to free you from all Doubts on this Head, we will run over the History of the most eminent
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Free-Thinkers, Ancient and Modern, and remark their want of Steadiness, Fortitude, and Constancy, their frequent Desertions of their own Principles, and their sinking in Conduct below even the ordinary Race of Mankind, whom they affect so much to contemn. In doing this, I shall carefully avoid all intermixture of Sneer or Ridicule. My aim is not to make you merry, but wise: To raise a Laugh, is no more a Token of being in the Right in Dispute, than to ring the Bells is a Proof of Victory after an Engagement. Both are commonly thought so, and therefore both have been frequently made use of to disguise a Defeat. Let us despise all Disguises, let us covet nothing but *Truth*!

I cannot foresee any Objection you can make to our beginning with the famous *Epicurus*, the most celebrated Free-Thinker of Antiquity. It is true, I have already said somewhat of his Philosophy, but here I intend to confine myself to his Character. You are sensible that he established *Pleasure*, as the chief Good of Man. I am not displeased with this, neither do I give any countenance to those Stories raised by the Enemies of him, and his Sect, which wound his Reputation in its tenderest Parts. I have read *Gassendi*, *Charlton*, *Digby*, *Rondel*, *Creech*, and other Admirers of his Philosophy, and I freely own,
that

that I think in many things they have fully vindicated him against the calumnious Charges of his Adversaries. But notwithstanding all this, there is nothing more certain, than that this eminent Philosopher was quite a different Person from what his own Disciples thought him, and these modern Apologists represent him. In short, he was far from being himself a happy Man, or one capable of instructing others in the Art of arriving at true Happiness. This, *Aristo*, is what I undertake to prove to you.

Epicurus foresaw, that the Pleasures of his Garden would be imbittered, if his Scholars amus'd themselves with any Considerations respecting their future State, or busied their Thoughts on Religious Subjects. In order to banish such Notions, he taught that Death was the absolute Period of Human Being, and that though there were Gods (which the Laws of his Country compelled him to acknowledge) yet they meddled not with the Affairs of Mankind, neither rewarded good, nor punished wicked Deeds. But this was teaching what could not answer his end of preventing Doubts or Fears. For *first*, this was a Doctrine which would not bear examining, either by Reason or Experience; the Sense of which, drew him into another inconsistency. And in the *second* place, it left Mankind to be under the Dominion

minion of *blind Chance*, instead of a *wise Providence*, which was surely a bad exchange, and a very odd way of procuring quiet. If his Disciples believed this, they must daily expect to see the Firmament crack, the Sun lose half his Light, their Gardens hoisted into savage Mountains, or covered by invading Seas. These are all fit Works for Chance? But they lived chearfully and merrily, and therefore certainly they did not believe it. How then were they Philosophers? Or how did their Master's Wisdom (as he and they loudly boasted) deliver them from Fear? Instead therefore of owing their *Felicity* to *Free-thinking*, these *Epicureans* must have been indebted for whatever Happiness they had to their *Freedom* from *Thinking*. Alas! my good Friend, what a *Philosophy* have we here?

BUT *Epicurus*, who made so free with all Authority, Human or Divine; he who refused to be bound, by the Dictates of universal Reason, or the Assertions of universal Experience; this Free-Thinker in Perfection, would bear no Contradiction. He would have all Oracles pass for Cheats, yet every Sentence of his was to have the Weight of an Oracle. He wrote innumerable Books, yet without one Quotation. He thought all who went before him mistaken, and Himself (by Chance too) everlastingly

lastingly in the right. Admirable Man! Which is most to be admired, his Wisdom or his Modesty? He overturned every Doctrine before his time, not because it was false, but that he thought it so. He did this, not in virtue of Reason, or Argument, for then he would have allowed his Disciples to canvass his Principles, but by his *ipse Dixit*. With good Reason then did *Lucretius* stile him Divine *Epicurus*, since he created a new kind of Science, and annihilated all the Wisdom of preceding times! Tell me *Aristo*, was *Epicurus* skilled in Free-thinking? If he was, then the only way to prevent Confusion, and secure Happiness, is to establish a certain Scheme of Doctrines, (no matter whether true or false) and forbid all Examination or dispute about them, that is, exclude Free-thinking for ever, on the Word of One Free-Thinker. What say you to this? Does it not demonstratively prove, that Free-Thinkers are a Restless sort of People? — Will you slight the Reason, will you dispute the Experience of the great *Epicurus*? — If you do, you must grant, that I have, at least, shewn it to be his Judgment?

BUT to carry the matter still farther, and as I have shewn you that implicate Faith was in *Epicurus's* Opinion the sole means of keeping up any System deduced by Free-thinking; let me proceed to convince you,
that

that this great Philosopher was not a little irresolute himself. He denied Providence, yet he worshipped the Gods, not prefuntorily, but with all exterior Marks of Fervency; nay, he carried this yet a greater length, since among his numerous Writings, there were many Treatises of Devotion. What are we to think of all this? If we give credit to his Doctrines, Prayer is nothing less than a Duty. If we yield any Faith to his Practice, then nothing appears of greater Importance. His Friends and his Enemies, offer us very different Solutions of this Riddle. His Friends assert; that he sincerely worshipped the Gods in respect to the Excellency of their Nature. Nay, some have gone a Step beyond this, and affirm'd, he did not deny Providence. The reverse of this, however, is clear, first, from his account of the Formation of the Universe, since ascribing this to Chance, how should the Gods come to govern what they never made? Secondly, he denies Providence expressly, in one of his Letters preserved by *Diogenes Laertius*. To this I might add, *Tully's* shrewd Observation, that *as Xerxes destroy'd the Temples of the Gods by Violence, so by Arguments, Epicurus proved the Destroyer of their Worship*. His Enemies alledge, his Piety was all Imposture, and that He worshipped the Gods, for the same rea-

son he maintained their Existence, for fear the *Athenians* should put Him to Death. Now, *Aristo*, take either Side. If you say he was a sincere Worshipper, shew me on what Grounds he worshipped? If you admit him a Hypocrite, teach me to know when and where he is sincere? In a Priest, such an Opposition between Principle and Practice, would be Evidence sufficient to convict him of Deceit. But what Proofs are requisite against a Philosopher, indicted of the same Offence, I profess I don't know. It remains with you to consider and decide; it is sufficient for me, that I have laid these things before you.

BEFORE I leave this eminent Free-thinker, let me submit to you a Notion I have long had in my Head, and which to me accounts for this Philosopher's whole Scheme. You know, his Mother was by Profession a Purifier of disturbed Places, or to speak it out, for I am sensible you Free-Thinkers hate mincing; the good old Gentlewoman made it her Business to lay Ghosts in the Red-Sea. Now, tho' this, like Fortune-telling, might be in repute with the Vulgar, yet certain it is, the better sort of *Athenians* look'd on this Employ, as not a great deal better, than that of Gipsy is now esteemed. *Epicurus* too assisted like a good Son, when his Mother was sent for to drive away

way Ghosts, and no doubt performed his Part with wonderful Devotion, because it was in his way, he had a Talent for this sort of Business. But I presume he had left off laying Spirits before he commenced Philosopher. Now, my Sentiment is, that having under the grave Matron's Care, entred into all the Arcana of her Occult Science, he found it just what all wise People thought it, a solemn Cheat. Upon this, perhaps, he took a Dislike at all Religion (no unusual Consequence of discovering pious Frauds) and began to beat his Brains, in order to account for all things, without introducing either the Divine Power or Wisdom. I own that this is meer Conjecture, and I shall not be in the least offended, if you should laugh at it as a meer Whimsy. But let me put you in mind of one thing, *Aristo*. That whatever System came at this time of Day from a Witch-finder, or a Spirit-driver, would be look'd on a little suspiciously. The Friends of Religion, are the greatest Enemies to Superstition. Those who are sincere Believers, would have considered the Mother of *Epicurus*, and her assisting Son, but in a very scurvy Light. Nor do I apprehend that this new System would have much heightned his Reputation. But to what length other People's credulity might go, I pretend not to determine.

THE Poet *Lucretius* naturally follows his Master *Epicurus*, and to him *Aristo*, I have the same Objections. That is to say, I find him visibly uneasy, unsteady, and inconsistent. His Commentators, and especially *Creech*, who certainly understood him best, commend him for the Sublimity of his Genius, the Clearness of his Expressions, and the Purity of his Language; in fine, they applaud him as an excellent Philosopher, and one, who was at the same time an admirable Poet. I am no Detractor, I have no spleen against *Lucretius*, and therefore I very readily admit all this, and join in giving him his due Praises without any sinister intention. But though I allow that he was a noble *Latin* Poet, and perfectly skilled in the *Epicurean* Philosophy, it does not follow that I must esteem him a proper Guide, in respect to the Conduct of Life, or that, however free his Thoughts might be, therefore he is to command mine. You are apprized from what I advanced in respect to him, whom he stiles the Divine *Epicurus*, what the matter of my charge against *Lucretius* is to be; you will also remember, that notwithstanding all I say, his Reputation, as a Wit, will remain unimpeached; my Attack is pointed not against his Wit, but his Wisdom. All this I am forced to say, that you may not take me for a *Vandal*

dal insensible of a Poet's Merit, because he was an Atheist.

IN his Poem, he proposes to explain the *Nature of Things*, yet the whole of it contains nothing but his Master's *Suppositions*. *Epicurus* had borrow'd his *Atoms* from *Democritus*, but to make them appear his own, denied that they were *animated*, which the other supposed. This prejudiced the System of *Epicurus*, and of this our Poet might have set himself free, but his Attachment to his Master bound up his Genius, and so in spite of all his Wit and Penetration, his whole Poem is a *Chain of Absurdities*, which he proposes to the Faith of his Reader, in order to rid him of all *fear of Death*, and of a *future State*. His Account of Men's being generated in a kind of boggy Molehills by the Sun's heat, and starting from thence like Mushrooms, no body knows when, or how, is unworthy of him, as a *Philosopher*, and scarce excusable in him as a *Poet*. Such Tales as these, are at once incredible and ridiculous, nor can one tell how to reconcile them to that solemnity with which he commends them to his *Patron*, as the choicest Flowers of Wisdom, and infallible Preservatives against Fear and Sorrow. For my part, when I compare his Promises and Performances, I am inclined to think his Apprehensions dictated the former,

mer, and his Fancy the latter. Had he not had strong fears himself, why should he place so much Merit in removing them? If there were really any convincing Arguments known to the *Epicureans*, why did he not produce them?

HE shews himself scarce satisfied with his own Doctrine when in his Invocation, and elsewhere he addresses himself to *Venus* with much earnestness. All the excuses which have been hitherto made for him, do not clear this Business, but rather make it worse; for by representing it as a *poetical Licence*, they contradict the Poet's repeated Promises to make his Philosophy and his Genius for Verse perfectly agree. Besides, he prays to *Chance* to avert the *Ruin* of the *World*, just after he has been proving it might, nay, it must be *destroy'd* by *Chance*. His Account of the *Gods* is agreeable to that of *Epicurus*, and in consequence thereof, is utterly *inconsistent* with his own *Principles*. For first, he says expressly, that *All* is either *Matter* or *Space*. *Matter* flowing from the *concourse* of *Atoms*; *Space* the *Void* serving for the *Scene* of their *Motion*. Yet the *Gods* he owns to be of another Composition. What a strange System of Opinions does this Poem exhibit? Or to speak plainly, how unaccountable a use hath *Lucretius* made of his Learning, in dressing up *incongruous Thoughts* in all the

the *Pomp of Numbers*? Was it to deceive his Patron? Or was he deceived himself? Children upon twice Reading would point out his Fallacies, if some Obscenities in his Works did not hinder us from putting them into their Hands. I own that there are also in his Poem some excellent Thoughts, yet *Moral Reflections* from a Man of *immoral Principles* are to be suspected, rather than applauded.

BUT I should act unfairly if I did not confess, that this great Free-Thinker was dis-temper'd in his Mind, and that very probably, many of his inequalities might be owing to this Disorder. Let me ask you *Aristo*, however, if this is not a little particular. Does Madness qualify or disqualify a Free-Thinker for a Preacher? If it does, what regard is due to our Philosophick Poet? If it does not, why are not one Mad-man's Dreams, as good as another's? The *Turks*, and indeed most *Mohammedan* Nations esteem Madness a kind of sacred Fury. It may perhaps be a Point of Wisdom in them, and the thinking otherwise a Degree of Folly in us. If so, instead of treating the Frenzy of *Lucretius* as an impeachment, we ought to consider it as an addition to his Authority. In this Light he will be not only the Philosopher and Poet, but the Prophet too of Free-thinking. In sober Sadness *Aristo*, I
have

have drawn myself into a Labyrinth, whence nothing but our Author's Principles can lead me forth. Thus, then, in the stile of an *Epicurean* Sophist. As the Mind is material as well as the Body, and Atoms constitute the one as well as the other, it follows that *Folly* or *Madness* are vulgar mistakes, terms which signify nothing, and ought therefore to be excluded among Men of Sense. If there could be such a Thing as a *sane* or an *insane* Mind in reality; the one must result from a *regular*, the other from an *irregular* Disposition of *Atoms*: but in as much as these are guided always, and in all things by Chance, the Dispute is at an end, one Mind is as well formed as another, *Madness* like *Ugliness* lies only in the Conception of others, and every Man hath, as to himself, as much *Sense* as his Neighbour. Behold, my Friend, a just Apology for *Lucretius*, which, if the *Gentlemen* in *Warwick-Lane* should dislike, I have nothing to do, but to call in the *Litterati* from *Moorfields*, and then put the Question. With this Proviso, that *Christians* shall reap no benefit from the Decision, but be obliged, as usual, to quote no Man's Authority who is not perfectly in his *Senses*. This Distinction being founded on *Free-thinking* Principles, *Free-Thinkers* only are, at least, ought to be intitled to this Privilege.

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THE same Spirit of Impartiality obliges me to confess, that though *Lucretius* is not every where consistent in his Writings, yet his End demonstrates he was no Dissembler, but truly and sincerely believed the Doctrines he taught. Some Disappointments chagrin'd Him, and like a Modern Man of Spirit, he threw up his Life as a troublesome Commission, which he thought no longer worth the keeping. Do you approve this *Aristo*? If you do study his Book closely, for I know none beside, wherein the Principles relating to Suicide are so well and warmly laid down; you cannot but see the reason of it. *Lucretius* had a mind to part with Life, and in consequence of this Desire, he drew together whatever might fortify his Resolution, or shew it to the World in a favourable Light. A young Woman who betrays the Honour of her Family, and runs away with her Father's Serving-man, writes her inconsolable Parent in the same stile, she sets her Wits at work in defending her Folly, which had been better employ'd in preventing it, and in this she succeeds; for though her Father despises her Epistle, it charms half the Mob in the Parish, and stirs up twenty silly Girls to ruin themselves by her Example. Thus it appears, that there is nothing more heroick in throwing away Life, than in throwing away one's Person;

in both Cases, to use the *French* Philosopher's Phrase, the Head is the Dupe of the Heart, and Reason employ'd to find Arguments for acting against Reason. But perhaps you disapprove the last Act of *Lucretius*? Have a care *Aristo*, you cannot do this, without giving up Free-thinking. If *Epicurus* had Genius, if his Philosophy had Merit, if any of his Disciples deserve Praise, *Lucretius* cannot be condemned. On the whole, this Philosopher and Poet was a Man of bright Parts, but of unequal Understanding. Laying down as certain weak and inconsistent Principles, and then arguing on them with inimitable force and beauty. He was a Person of great Honour, but deficient in more important Points, he derived from his Master a high Conceit of his own Wisdom, and contemptible Ideas of the Wit of other Men. Heretofore, when all Philosophy lay buried in Darkness, the Madness of *Lucretius* might pass for Sublimity of Spirit. But now the new Philosophy hath convinced us, that his Notions are all false, to suffer his Poetry to turn the Tables, and bubble us again, is unworthy of Free-Thinkers.

It is natural to mention next a Free-thinking Martyr. Such a one was *Petronius Arbitr*, one of the most applauded among the *Epicureans*, and especially commended by
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the Moderns, as one superiour while living to all the Wits of his time, and equal in his Death to the most distinguish'd of the Philosophers, *M. A. SENECA*. But in the midst of these Praises, it is not denied, that he was the most inconsistent Man ever drew Breath. He had great Talents for Business, with a strong Propensity to Idleness. No body better understood the Folly of being wicked, no body ran deeper into Wickedness than he. Absurdity in Pleasure, his nice Taste could not endure, but an immodest and luxurious Life hit this Taste of his exactly. His Thoughts were often impious, rarely modest, but his Latin pure to a Proverb. To sum up all, he thought the Day fit for nothing but snoring, for which cause he indulged his Pleasures during the Night. Such is the Man set up to rival *Seneca*; I wonder much they did not compare him to *Socrates* himself! It would have cost but a few Words more, and the same Arguments would have served again.

ON the other hand, it's allow'd, that *Nero* treated him basely. He was at first Director of this Emperor's Pleasures, and so highly in his good Graces, that *Nero* would allow no Sentiments on this Head right, if *Petronius* disapproved them. Another Fav'rite, who had a more intriguing Head, but a worse manner of paying his

Compliments, instill'd some Jealousies into *Nero's* Mind, by which means, and through the natural Depravity, and miserable Inconstancy of that Tyrant's Temper, an order was obtain'd for *Petronius* to put himself to Death. This undoubtedly varies this Man's Case from that of *Lucretius*. The former was clearly and plainly Suicide, but so was not this; *Petronius* being his own Executioner, and not Murderer. On this account I shall readily own him superiour to *Lucretius*, and on a level with *Seneca*, but I believe it will be difficult to prove him his Equal in any thing, except in falling by the Rage of *Nero*. Can this Accident be sufficient to fix their Merit on a par. The Free-thinkers themselves do not pretend so, they magnify the Manner of his Death, and thence equal him with the illustrious Stoic.

There is in Death something so shocking, so repugnant to Human Nature, that when in consequence of any Principles, a Man meets this formidable Enemy with a settled Countenance, and shews as little Terror at the approach of final Dissolution, as another at the temporary Suspension of one's Faculties performed daily by Sleep, it actually surprizes the Spectator, and seems to be the utmost reach of heroic Constancy. No wonder then if two Men dying without signs of Fear, are thought equal to each other by the
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the Vulgar, but for Men who to think without Limitation, to assert this, is amazing. Does the last Act of a Man's Life cancel, or does it change the Nature of all he did therein? If it does not, there must be a wide difference between *Seneca* and *Petronius*. To discern this, cast your Eyes upon their Writings. Were ever Men so opposite? *Seneca* shews Virtue in the fairest Light, *Petronius* never shews her at all. The former proposes always the exalting our rational Faculties; the latter is for making them subservient to our Passions. In a word, if we follow the One, we must be Sober and Honest; if the other, Lewd and Extravagant. Can sameness in Death, make such different Lives equal?

I own that I have deviated a little from my Subject, in what I have been saying, but let us resume it again, by considering the *Petronian* Satyr. That it is elegant no Man will deny, but as a Man would be hang'd for penning Treason in *Latin*, so I do not apprehend that Immorality ceases to be Immorality, when turned into that Language. I must therefore say of Him as of *Lucretius*, saying to him his Character as a Wit, he is a very bad, and a very inconsistent Writer. For wherein, I pray, lies the Elegance of his Satyr? Does it not consist in exposing gross and unnatural Lusts? If so,
why

why did he not see the Filthiness of all sensual Pleasure, and the innate Loveliness of Virtue. There can be nothing clearer than *Horace's Rule*,

*Est modus in rebus, sursum certi denique fines,
Ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum.*

Nice are the Bounds which unto *Right* belong,
And but a *Step* on either side — is *Wrong*.

Such as have apologiz'd for *Petronius* say, his Aim was to fright us from *Vice*; but if it was, he certainly took an odd way. The better Account seems to be, that he wrote to expose the Court of *Nero*, not to *Men* strict in their *Morals*, but to *Men* of *Taste* in *Pleasure*. It was not the Life or Writings of *Petronius*, it was his *Death* only recommended him to the Applause of Free-thinkers; to this, therefore, let me speak again.

WE are told, that he caused his Veins to be opened in a Bath, directed them sometimes to be bound up again, and then suffered to bleed afresh. Conversing all this while with his Friends on ordinary Subjects, hearing Musick sometimes, and sometimes directing Verses to be repeated, ordering the Affairs of his Family as usual, rewarded some Slaves, causing others to be punished,
he

he fell at last asleep, as it were, in the Arms of Death. His Will too, spoke him in full Possession of his Senses, for therein he bestowed his Effects as he thought proper, without imitating the unaccountable Corruption of the Age he lived in, when it was common for Men put to Death by the Prince's order, to bequeath all they had to him and his Favourites. But with all this shew of Constancy, *Pliny* tell us, he caused a Vase of great Value to be broken, that it might not adorn the Cabinet of *Nero*. Methinks I see nothing of Heroism in this! On the whole, I am not at all surprized at the extravagant Praises which have been bestowed upon this Action, it was the utmost Effort of an *Epicurean*, and *Petronius* died in that Character beyond dispute. Thus far his Admirers have Reason.

BUT *Aristo*, shall I own it to you? I see no great Courage in this manner of Dying. An *Epicurean* believes, that except the Pain suffered in the Article of *Dissolution*, there is nothing Evil in *Death*. He is no way anxious about Futurity, the bare Concern he has, is how to die decently! In order to this, *Petronius* made use of Poems, Musick, the Presence of his Friends, and many other Arts. By attending to these, and by reflecting continually on the Glory he was acquiring, he kept *Death* out of his *Head*, till it seized his
Heart.

Heart. Meaner Men have done as much without having recourse to Philosophy. The Duke *de Rochefoucault* having remarked, that Men naturally decline looking on the Sun and on Death, tells us, that notwithstanding this, a *Foot-Boy* collected his Spirits enough, to dance a *Minuet* a Moment before he was *broke* upon the *Wheel*. To fill the Mind with false and chimerical Notions in order to keep out just Ideas because of their Consequences, is not Philosophy, but Fraud and Folly. At least, so it appears to me, I see nothing more of Courage in a modern Suicide, than I do of Generosity in a young Fellow's running out of his Estate, the one despises *Death*, for want of considering what it is, the other lavishes *Money*, for want of knowing its *Value*.

Seneca bled like *Petronius*, and there was some appearance of Vanity in his manner of leaving the World. *I bequeath*, said he, *the Memory of my Death to my Friends*. But then he said this, because the Tyrant left him nothing else to give them. Besides there was great propriety in the Thought. *Seneca* did not die with wrong, or mean Notions about Death, but quite the contrary; he spent his last Moments in discoursing on the Immortality of the Soul, expatiating on the beauty and excellency of Virtue, justifying all the fine Things he said then, and had formerly

merly said by a noble and truly philosophick Constancy. The death of *Socrates* was in truth superiour to that of *Seneca*, because *Socrates* had never been within the infectious air of a Court, which is always fatal to a Man's Virtues or to his Reputation; but I leave you to judge whether the Death of *Petronius* be comparable to that of *Seneca*, who, instead of tying up his Veins to familiarize Death, was constrained, through the Strength of his Constitution, which proceeded from Temperance, to use various Methods to hasten his Departure.

EPICURUS, *Lucretius*, and *Petronius*, make so great a Figure among the ancient Free-Thinkers, that I think I need say nothing to you more on this Subject. But I judge it very expedient a few of the Moderns should be run over, that you may see Time has made no Alteration in this Matter, but that all Free-Thinkers have continued uneasy, inconstant, vap'rish, full of Flights, and in a word, perfect *Self-Tormentors*.

IN my Remarks on the Free-Thinkers among the Ancients, I did not trouble you with Dates, because they were needless; but I must, to avoid Confusion, be more exact in speaking of the Philosophers of later Times. I will begin with the celebrated *Jerome Cardan*, the rather because tho' he is not always mentioned by such as have

borrowed from him, yet he methodized and suggested Arguments in support of certain Notions which to this Day are Fav'rites with Free-Thinkers; nay, are laid up among their *Arcana*, and are, when produced, held the highest Flights of humane Intelligence, and irrefragable Bars against believing. Now with regard to him, I shall first mention a few Circumstances of his Life (the more certain, because set down originally by his own Pen) and then I will go on to consider some of his extraordinary Opinions. By this means you will see Things clearly, and in their proper Light. His History enlightening his Doctrines, as those again will be shewn to take rise from his Constitution or his Circumstances, an Observation too often verified in the Broachers of new Notions or Revivers of ancient Heresies.

OUR Philosopher was born in *A. D.* 1501 in the City of *Pavia*. His Father was a very learned and famous Man, but however bore his Son but little Affection. From his very Birth *Jerome* struggled with many and great Difficulties; however he still continued to study incessantly, receiving the Bonet of Doctor of Physick at *Padua* in the Year 1525. He acquired in the Course of a few Years the Reputation of a very deep Scholar, not only in respect to his

his own Profession, but also in regard to the Mathematicks and other Sciences. This occasioned many Offers to be made of Professors Chairs, and other Preferments in *Italy*, most of which he declined. In 1552 he went into *Scotland* to attend Archbishop *Hamilton* Primate of *St. Andrews*. He afterwards passed through *England*, had Access to King *Edward VI.* whose Nativity he then carefully calculated, and a long Life promised to one who died before the Promise was well made. In his Travels he passed thro' *France*, *Germany*, and the *Low Countries*, and at length returned into *Italy*. He settled at *Bologna* in 1562, went thence to *Rome* in 1571, and died there 1576. Some say, that having predicted the Day of his Demise, he voluntarily starved himself in order to fulfil his Prophecy; for my own part, I look upon this either as a Calumny or a Mistake; because in truth it was his Father *Facio Cardan*, who at the Age of Fourscore, by nine Days fasting opened a Passage to the Grave in *A. D.* 1524. I am not ignorant that some Men of great reputation have asserted this as an indubitable Fact, but then I know too that these Men are extravagant Enemies to *Cardan's* Memory, and therefore readily credit whatever may contribute to lessen or defame him. But as I aim only at truth, I think my-

self obliged rather to state my own Sentiments than those of others.

HE was from his Infancy of a weak Constitution, and in his Youth attack'd by severe Fits of Illness. In his manner of living he was always unfortunate, Poverty being his constant Attendant. His immoderate Passion for Play expos'd him to this and to many other Evils. He wrote at so much a Sheet, and as he tells us himself, he often insert'd Things which were foreign to the Purpose in order to compleat what he bargained for ; and to make his Book of its right Size. He had many and great Misfortunes in his family. From his Nonage wherein he endured great Severities, to the Hour of his Death, he never enjoyed Peace at home, but was sometimes so much disturbed in his Mind as to be in danger of Distraction, or of murdering himself, to which he owns he had frequently an Inclination. His Passion for Glory was excessive ; his Learning was prodigious ; he remembred whatsoever he read, and could most fluently express on any subject whatever Authors had said upon it. This is a true Picture of *Cardan*, as drawn from his own Writings. And when you have calmly considered it, I doubt not of your owning that my Observations on his Philosophy are well grounded, and that I say no more than the Love of Truth

Truth may well be supposed to extort from me.

THE capital Doctrine of *Cardan* was the supreme inevitable Power of celestial Influences on terrestrial Bodies. He supposed not only the Affairs of private Men; the Welfare or Destruction of Societies; the Growth or Decay of Empires to depend upon the Motions of the Stars, but he ascribed also to them the Appearance, Progress, and Declension of all Religions, calling *Abraham*, *Moses*, and even *CHRIST* sydereal Prophets, attempting to account for the whole Series of the Life, Sermons, Miracles, Sufferings and Passion of the latter, from a Scheme he framed of his Nativity, and a Judgment thereon from the common Rules of Astrology.

IT may seem strange, that acknowledging this for *Cardan's* chief Opinion, I should yet speak of him as a Free-Thinker. Herein however, I am not singular, for so he is considered by the most knowing and impartial Writers, and so in Reason he ought to be accounted; for without extraordinary Liberty of Sentiment, he would scarcely have subjected his *Saviour* to the Operations of the *Stars*, which as the Scriptures inform us, were obedient to his Command, and were employed to reveal his Coming to the *Heathen*; as on the other hand,

hand, he has opened a Door wide enough for all Free-Thinkers to come in, by insinuating that his Abilities of Mind, and great power in doing Miracles were vested in him by *Sydereal Influence*. This is the Notion which makes *Cardan* valued at this Day, and will always preserve the good Opinion of those who willingly admit any Hypothetical Account of such Things, and provided 'tis bold and new, repugnant to what they call *Priestcraft*, and unburdened with *hard Duties*, never start Difficulties about its Inconsistency with *Reason*, but wisely place it among the number of natural *Mysteries*, which it is necessary to receive, in order to keep out *Revelation*. Besides the Learning of *Cardan* (which is on all hands allowed to have been very deep and very extensive) giving some countenance to this *Doctrine*, they think themselves at liberty to build what they please on this Foundation, and having the *Influence* of the *celestial Orbs* to retreat to on all Occasions, they advance with much Freedom whatever other odd *Notions* come into their Heads, as you cannot but know well enough, since you are conversant both with them and with their Writings. It is likewise said, that *Cardan* wrote somewhat against the *Immortality* of the *Soul*, which he shewed only to some particular Friends; but I own I doubt

doubt of this ; I rather believe he gave his Disciples a *Key* to another Work, which he actually published, and made it thereby answer that Purpose. This also, however managed, gained him Abundance of Friends and Followers, and is another Reason for my mentioning *Cardan* in this Essay, in the course of which I shall prove what now I only allege.

BUT in spite of these *strong Notions*, notwithstanding all these *free* and *strange* Conceptions (which however were all borrowed from *Albumazar*, *Averroes*, and other *Arabian* Writers) *Cardan* was no *Hero*, but on the contrary, weak, irresolute, and even superstitious. He boasted of *four* Excellencies, peculiar Gifts, or special Prerogatives, he derived from *Nature*. I. That he could fall into an Extacy when he pleased. II. That he at all times could see whatsoever he desired. III. That whatever happened to him was shewn him in his Dreams. IV. That he distinguished the *course* of *Events* by certain *Spots* upon his *Nails*. These singular Endowments he long concealed, but being at last like to burst with his Secret, out it came, and who can believe it? He sometimes reason'd as if he doubted the fundamental Principles of *Religion*, at others he maintained Spectres, Demons, Witches, and one knows

not what. In many of his Works he pretends to the supreme Constancy of a Philosopher, in some again he deplores his Misfortunes with intemperate Lamentations. In one place he assures us he had a *Demon*, in another he doubts it, in a third he is positive he had none. He might have been preferred in *Denmark*, but his Conscience would not allow him to profess *Lutheranism*. He believed that Prayers to the *bleſſed Virgin* at a certain Season were attended with extraordinary efficacy, and used them. He was a staunch Advocate for *Nurſes Tales* of Fairies and Hobgoblins, and affirms some of them on his own knowledge. *Thuanus* might well ſay of him, *In ſome Things he appears wiſer than Man, in others more ſimple than a Child.*

SUCH *Ariſto*, was the celebrated *Cardan* ! If you will not truſt me, conſult *Naude* or *Bayle* ; but if you would behold him in a much ſtronger light than I have placed him, read *Parker's Diſputationes de Deo*, a Book admired by Foreigners, ſcarce known (I ſpeak of young People) among ourſelves. Alas ! what Miſchiefs do Party-Diſtinctions create. *Sam. Parker* was a *Tory* in Principle, and therefore his excellent Works are neglected, tho' they relate to the moſt important Truths, and have all the Worth *Learning* can give, or *Language* beſtow ! Pardon, *Ariſto*, this
excursion,

excursion, remember it is in the Cause of Free-thinking. I would have a Man valued by his *intrinsick Worth*, and not according to the *Stamp* set on Him by a Party. But perhaps this is thinking, or at least writing *too freely*. — Let us therefore cut short our Digression.

JORDANUS Brunus, whom, with good Cause, we place next to *Jerom Cardan*, was a *Neapolitan*, born at *Nola* about 1550. He was competently learned, especially in Philosophy, had a deep, and at the same time; a ready Wit, wrote elegantly in his own Language, and according to the Mode of the Age in which he flourished, most obscurely in the *Latin Tongue*. About 1580 he quitted his Order, (for he was a *Dominican*) retired to *Geneva*, where he professed *Calvinism*, but growing quickly weary also of that Religion, he removed into *France*, visited *Lyons*, *Tholouse*, and *Paris*, distinguished himself by opposing *Aristotle's* Philosophy, and by advancing many new Opinions, which were not worse received for their being little understood. He then visited *England*, where the Language and Manners of the *Italians* were at that time more esteemed than they are even now, as the excellent *Roger Ascham* complains, and assigns but too just Reasons for his Complaint. Here he had access to Sir *Philip Sidney*, and

formed a select Assembly of Free-Thinkers, or rather of the Freest-Thinkers. Sparks no doubt of the *Leicestrian* Faction, who, with exterior Professions of super-abundant Purity, were Disciples of another School in their Hearts. To this great Courtier *Sidney*, he dedicated his *Spaccio della Bestia trionfante*, the most excreable Work the World ever saw; of which, no more than twenty Copies were printed, one of which was presented to Queen *Elizabeth*. It bears in the Title-Page *Paris* 1584, but that was only to save Appearances. The next Year he published a Rhapsody of *Italian* Poetry, which is likewise dedicated to Sir *Philip Sidney*, who went shortly after into the *Netherlands*, and was killed there in 1586. *Jordanus Brunus*, thus deprived of his Patron, rambled next through *Germany*, visiting various Universities, and every where boasting, disputing, and leaving Marks of his aspiring Temper, he became by degrees generally known. At last, he was touched with a strong Desire of seeing *Italy* again, and coming to *Venice*, either on Business or Pleasure, he was seized and imprisoned by the Inquisition, and afterwards transmitted to *Rome*, where as an Atheist, after two Years Imprisonment, and all imaginable Pains taken to bring him to a Sense of his Errors, he

was

was publickly burned on the 17th of February 1600.

THIS Man maintained an infinite Number of Worlds, which sometimes he stiled Gods ; he set a Copy to *Spinoza* in his Notions concerning Nature, which he represented as the same with God ; he imagined that Souls passed through a Variety of Bodies, and even through an infinity of Worlds ; he look'd upon Death, as a necessary Change of no great Importance ; and as to Revelation, he not only disbelieved, but despised it. He makes it *Bestia Trionfante*, and does his utmost to exclude it from the Veneration of Men, by exerting against it All that a Spirit of Cavilling and of Ralliery could suggest : The Pregnancy of this Man's Wit, the Subtilty of his Genius, his varied Stile, now Verse, now Prose, the Novelty of his Notions, and that Air of Superiority with which he proposes his Conjectures, will always preserve him Followers amongst such as affect rather the Fame, than the Fruit of Philosophy ; but as he reaped neither Profit nor Peace from his extravagant Principles, so I am persuaded they will prove of no greater Benefit to any of our modern Wits, who embrace them.

FOR if we may guess at the Value of such sublime Sentiments by the use they were of to this Philosopher, then we shall find that they

contribute little to Felicity, or Contentment. For tho' *Jordanus Brunus* modestly assumed the highest Degree of Wisdom to himself in an Address to the University of *Oxford*, and treated all who differ'd from him in Opinion as Smatterers, Envious Pedants, and Illiterate; yet we do not find in his Writings any Discoveries of a practicable and useful Nature, we meet with bold Assertions and swelling Promises, but when we look for the Performance of these, all is dark, cloudy, confused, and we are told, it should be so, for the Vulgar are not to come into the Sanctuary of Science. This is not Priestcraft, but surely it is some sort of Craft, or other. He was for establishing perfect Morality, and the Religion of Nature, because purer than any other. His Life, however, was not either chaste or regular, his Writings defiled with Obscenities, and he was so lost to Shame, as to dedicate a loose and blasphemous Comedy to an *English* Lady. His boasted Constancy, which enabled him to become a Martyr for Impiety, did not hinder him from feeling and complaining passionately of Poverty, from fawning on *M. de Castlenau*, *Sir Philip Sidney*, and others for Subsistence, and from many other things, which a Man of Spirit would not have done. To sum up all, this celebrated Subduer of Vulgar Errors, this Enemy

my to received Opinions, this Investigator of new Worlds was superstitious, he talked of Dæmons, nay and of Witches, and swallowed Tales which now-a-days would be laughed at by a School-Boy. ——— Such Contraries can lodge in Man! and which is much more, in the Breast of some who think themselves superiour to the rest of their Species.

LUCILIO Vanini is now so well known, that I was almost in doubt whither I should give him place; but having considered the matter attentively, I determined in the Affirmative, for these Reasons. I. The more notorious he is, the more clear and certain what I shall say about him will appear. II. We have enough of these sort of People's Opinions already canvassed by every body, and therefore it is equally needless and inexpedient to introduce strange Names and new Instances of Impiety. *Lucilio Vanini* was born at *Taurisano* in the Kingdom of *Naples*, he descended from Persons in indifferent Circumstances, and according to his own Writings, came into the World in 1585. He studied at *Rome* Philosophy, Astronomy, the Civil and Canon Law, but chiefly Divinity; some say he was a Monk, and expelled his Cloister for his immoral Behaviour; however, all agree, he was a Priest, and in this Capacity he served the
Mareschal

Mareschal de Bassompierre for a Chaplain. After leaving *Italy*, he travelled up and down *Germany*, *France*, and other Countries, visited *England* in 1614, and as he says himself, was imprisoned here forty-nine Days on a religious Account. Afterwards he returned into *Italy*, whence he was driven again into *France*; where, after abundance of strange Practices, writing his *Amphitheatrum*, and his *Dialogues*, he in the end, settled at *Tholouse*, and there pretended to instruct Youth, but privately corrupted them, and poisoned their Minds with Atheistical Notions; for which, being apprehended and for some time imprisoned, in the end, by a Decree of the Parliament in that City, he was condemned to be burnt alive, which Sentence was executed in the Month of *February* 1619, with the utmost Severity. His Books, however, still remain; and tho' in his Calamity he found no Friend, yet of late he has found an Apologist, who by his Arguments endeavours to reverse his Sentence, and expunge his Guilt, but with small effect.

His favourite Authors were *Aristotle*, *Averroes*, *Cardan*, &c. from these he learned to think, freely shall I say, or to allow his Imagination to wander without restraint. He was absolutely a Naturalist, and yet he blended this with the Astrological System.

He

He sometimes treated Religion cavalierly, at others, he affected Bigotry; nay, he pretended to aspire to the Crown of Martyrdom. He railed at Atheists, wrote Books to confute them, and scattered the Seeds of Atheism in those very Books; in one word, he was alike impious and inconsistent, as all who have written concerning him allow, and as his own Writings abundantly testify. He was, perhaps, the vainest, and at the same time, the meanest Creature ever drew Breath: in his Dialogues he make his Disciple *Alexander* deify him; and in a Dedication, he tells *M. Bassompierre*, how great Conquests his Person had made among the Ladies, and that if he was a *Platonist*, the *Mareschal's* Beauty would induce him to think the Soul of the World resident in his Body; and all this, only to desire he would not forget to put his Hand in his Purse. His changing his Name is a no less memorable mark of Pride and Folly; for supposing *Lucilio* not sounding enough, he took first that of *Pompey*, and afterwards called himself *Julius Cæsar*, which is that, whereby he is commonly known.

It would grieve me, it may be it would offend you, should I enter into a more precise Detail of this unlucky Man's Miseries. All he sought by his high-flown Speculations, was to reconcile his Practice and his Principles

ciples to divest himself of Fear, and to attract the Admiration of the less Knowing by the Boldness of his Doctrines. With this View he studied, travelled, wrote, disputed, died, and yet, in spite of his Philosophy, his Heroism, his Contempt of the Vulgar, he was in the course of his Life a Vagabond, in the last Stage thereof a Malefactor. Good God! what Men are these, they set at naught what all others esteem Wisdom, and by which they arrive at Happiness and Reputation, yet their superiour Science conducts them to neither one nor t'other. They slight Religion, they revere Astrology; they despise Revelation, yet seek to establish their own Dreams; they contend for Morality, but remove all Helps thereto; in fine, they promise mathematick Certainty, they put us off with delusive Conjectures. I speak *Aristo*, of such as I have described, who yet assumed to themselves the glorious Name of Free-Thinkers. I will refresh your Memory but with one Instance more, and then conclude. In truth, I am weary, I tremble at the Pictures I have already drawn, and nothing could hinder me from expunging them, while it is yet in my power, but the Reflection, that they are far less frightful than the Life. If you consider ever so little, you must grant me this.

THE

THE Name of *Spinoza*, is so famous, as well amongst those who detest, as those who approve his Opinions; that I could not have chosen a more proper Person than he, to close the Instances, I offer you, of the uneasiness and want of Tranquillity, incident to *Free-Thinkers*. He was by Descent a *Jew*, by Birth a *Dutchman*. He was born at *Amsterdam*, the 24th of *November* 1632, and received from his Parents the Name of *Baruch*, he was afterwards known by the Name of *Benedict*, and the initial Letters *B. D. S.* which are in the Title-Pages of his Books, stand for either of his Names. From his Youth, he was inclined to Study, more than to Business; a rare thing among the *Jews*: His Parents, who were in low Circumstances, encouraged this Disposition, and placed him under the Care of one *Francis Van den Ende*, who was paid for teaching him *Latin*, and who taught him the Principles of Atheism, into the Bargain. With the Daughter of this Preceptor, *Spinoza* became enamoured; but she preferred another of her Father's Scholars, and this was one of his first Disappointments. Afterwards, he became dissatisfied with the Religion of his Fathers. He had read some of the Books of *Des Cartes*, and from them concluded, that all the *Rabbinical Learning* was trivial, childish, and ridiculous. He

did not stop here, he condemned also *Moses* and the Prophets; though there are not in the World, Books more opposite in their Stile and Tenor, than the Scriptures, and the *Rabbinical Commentaries*. On account of these Notions, the *Jews* solemnly excommunicated him, and even attempted upon his Life; which occasioned, his breaking off all Correspondence with them, and affecting a very obscure manner of living. That he professed himself a *Christian*, is the common Opinion, but I know no Grounds for it. He was reserved, spoke by Starts, frequently dissembled his Principles, was of a splenetick, melancholy disposition, vain of his Philosophick Moderation, cautious of discoursing on Religion, and exceedingly averse to any Disputes about it. His Landlord and Landlady coming home from Church, found him dead, *Feb. 21. 1677*, in the 45th Year of his Age.

THE Basis of his Philosophy, if it be lawful for a Stranger to apprehend what his Disciples scarce understood, was this, *The Universe is infinite, and most excellent; it is the same thing with Nature, or the Deity; all things are by natural necessity, and are as they are, because they could not possibly be otherwise.* He affected Geometrick Reasoning, because he was used to it, and when he had digested his Thoughts into that Dialect, he
took

took his own Suppositions for Demonstrations. He went pretty much on *Jordano Bruno's* Notions, though he wanted his Vivacity, as *Vanini* copied *Cardan*, without having his Solidity. There is no Wonder need be made, as to the Reputation *Spinoza* acquired, for Free-thinking will always make a Noise, and by some Folks be esteemed the height of Wisdom, as meer *Enthusiasm* by others is mistaken for the Heavenly Spirit. Had *Spinoza* been a Monk, he would have been certainly fainted, for his Temper would have pushed him to extravagant Mortifications; as it is, his Oddities have procured him only the Character of a Philosopher.

Now it must be owned Consistency and Constancy were strongly pretended to by this Patron of Free-thoughts; however, I submit to your Judgment these indubitable Facts. He really look'd on *Moses* as no better than a Man of Art, yet he would never have broken with the *Jews*, if they had not excommunicated him, and even then, he wrote an Apology. He disclaimed all regard for Things of this World, yet he paid his Court to the Prince of *Condé* at *Utrecht*, when the *French* Arms had reduced his Country to the Brink of Ruin, and asserted he missed the Prince when he came back to avoid the Imputation of be-

ing a Spy, though the Fact was otherwise. He exhorted the Family where he lodged to attend Sermons, to live piously, and keep stedfast to their Religion. Yet in his Heart, he look'd on all Religions in the same light, and believed them alike significant. If these Proofs do not amount to Irresolution, or Inconsistency at least, they prove him a Dissembler, whose Conduct therefore is no Evidence in his own favour. He studiously avoided all Disputes, and endeavoured to hinder Arguments in his presence. He sometimes continued in his Room two or three Days without stirring out, and even when he found his End drawing on, took precautions to keep his Friends from attending him. All which argues an obstinate Attachment to his particular Scheme of Fame, but is surely no great Token of Philosophick Firmness. His Life was better, but his Death was far less Heroick than that of *Petronius Arbiter*. He plainly suspected his own Constancy, and therefore we injure not his Memory, if we also suspect it.

AFTER the Pains I have taken in exhibiting these Characters, permit me *Aristo*, to make some few Observations, and to leave them with you for your serious Consideration. This is perfectly agreeable to your own Notions, you cannot exercise your Thoughts to better Purpose, nor do I know
of

of any thing I have advanced in this Discourse, which can give you room to judge that I have a grain less Affection for you now, than before you were pleased to give yourself out for a Free-Thinker. I shall not depart at all from this Moderation in my Remarks, but treat the Persons I have been speaking of as tenderly, as well as truly, as is in my power; there being no sort of Intention in me to injure them, by bringing their Names at present on the Tapis, but only to furnish both myself and you with the means of judging fairly, freely, and on proper Evidence. Besides, Writers on your Side of the Question have frequently taken the same Method, therefore it must be fair in me; for in Matters of Argument, Free-Thinkers always believe themselves the best Judges, not only of the Points in Dispute, but also of the Forms and Ceremonies, respecting Controversy.

FIRST then, it seems to me plain, that none of these eminent *Free-Thinkers* have done much Service to the World. *Epicurus* led with his Friends an indolent Life in his Gardens, where they professedly sought to amuse themselves, without meddling with other People Affairs. I own that he made vast Professions of *Patriotism*, but so he did of *Piety*; in *Athens*, you know, it was not safe to do otherwise. *Lucretius* lived
distracted,

distracted, therefore he could not benefit Society. *Petronius*, as a Man of Pleasure, made a *Figure* in the Court of *Nero*; but sure, that was making no very amiable *Figure* in Life. The whole Business of *Cardan* was to abuse others, and to defend himself, from the Abuses such a Conduct induced. *Jordano Bruno* ran up and down the World, teaching the *Lullian Art*, and the rest of his Chimæra's. *Vanini* published nothing which can be called of *Publick Utility*: And as for *Spinoza*, making Spectacles, is the best thing I find in our Accounts of him. The ancient Poets tell us, that Men were deified for inventing useful Arts, and for shining Acts of Beneficence; this translated into our common Language, means no more than that it is God-like for Men to do good to Men. Alas *Aristo*, how few of our Chiefs will, according to these Principles, be honoured with an *Apotheosis*!

BUT next they did little or no good to themselves. This I have already proved at large, therefore shall not offer to recapitulate here. Only allow me to say, that Imagination on the stretch, boundless Speculations, everlasting Doubts, and ever varying Ideas are so great Additions to the inevitable Labours of Human Life, and the Anxieties which necessarily attend it, that we need not stand amazed at the Perplexities of *Free-Thinkers*,

Thinkers, or pretend to wonder at their stepping now and then after *Lucretius's Mode* into the other World. On the contrary, we ought rather to admire their Constancy when they decline this Remedy, and bear up against the *Storms of Fortune*. How much does their Courage in this case, exceed that of *Christians*? I speak the Truth from my Soul, I think there is less Heroism in burning at a Stake for the Gospel, than in bearing a Fit of the Stone three Days, nay three Hours, on the Principles of *Epicurus*. To merit eternal Happiness, what Pain would not a Man endure? but Pain without Hope, is sufficient to force one on any Remedy.

TAKE them in any light you will, consider their Lives, contemplate their Deaths, view their Doctrines, still there is nothing lovely in the Prospect. Can we compare *Epicurus* to *Socrates*, or *Spinoza* to *Grotius*? Can we without departing from common Sense, applaud the Lives of any of these Sages? If we cannot do this, why should we tread their Steps? why adhere to a Plan we do not intirely approve? It is true, we may fancy that it was the *Strength* of their *Passions*, rather than the *Freedom* of their *Thoughts*, which misled these Men, and that therefore we may think as *freely* as they, without falling into the same Disorders. But at the
Bottom

Bottom, this is mere Delusion. *Free-thinking*, in the Stile of these Doctors, implies such a freedom from Restraint, as most evidently unchains the *Passions*; now if we escape the effects of this, it must be owing to the *weakness* of our *Passions*, but a propensity to *Free-thinking*, argues quickness in our *Desires*, so that *Passions* are naturally *strong* in *Persons* of this *Cast*, and at the same time without *Check* or *Restraint*. It is better in time to weigh these Things, than to acknowledge the Truth of them, in Consequence of our own Experience. Knowledge, like Gold, is always valuable, but it may notwithstanding be sometimes bought too Dear.

It must be acknowledged, and hath been more than once granted by me, that this Scheme is very captivating in its first Appearance, because it promises to exalt us in a manner above our Species; but then, if we want Penetration enough to discern the Fallacy of such Promises, let us call in these, and such like Examples to our Aid, let us from them learn to moderate our Thirst for Science, and to direct our Inquiries, so as to obtain what is fit for us, rather than run on in endless pursuits. Hunting is a good Diversion, but when Men spend all their Time, or the greatest part of their Time in Hunting, it is universally condemned. So in regard

gard to airy Speculations, I do not say, that they may not sometimes be indulged; there are Diversions suited to a Philosophick as well as to a Gallant Temper; and a Trip to the World of *Des Cartes*, is quite as innocent, as taking half a dozen Turns in *St. James's Park*. But still these Excursions are warrantable only as Amusements, we must regulate our Lives by thinking in another way. That we have a Power of Thinking without restraint, freely, or at random, is no sort of Proof, that we have a right to exercise that Power in its utmost extent. We are at liberty, in respect to our manner of Living, but this does not justify Licentiousness. Corruption is the natural and unavoidable Consequence of deviating from Moral Rectitude, and Confusion follows as necessarily and as inevitably from a wrong turn in Thinking. This is what we may easily and certainly discover, not only in the general, but in almost every particular Branch of Knowledge; and this is confirm'd to us in such a manner by Experience, that it ought to be the first Principle in our System of Prudence, or Art of Life.

The genuine Ends of Thinking, seem to be Peace, Ease, and Beneficence. In order to enjoy the first, we must fix our Notions, in respect to our Being, its Source, Duration, and End of enduring; or in other Words, our

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Duty

66 *The* FREE-THINKER.

Duty towards God. By the second, I understand the Possession of whatever is necessary and convenient for that part of our Being, which is assigned us in this World. And by the last, I intend the Extension of our good Offices to our Brethren, or in the *Christian* Style, Works of Charity. A due Capacity for these Things, is the supreme Happiness of Man; that is as Man, which includes an Idea of Imperfection mix'd with a Hope of shaking it off. Now, as to the Method of regulating our Cogitations, so as most effectually to answer the before-mentioned Ends, and thereby acquire that Felicity adapted to our Nature, it shall be the Subject of another Discourse, which I shall intreat you to read with Patience, to consider without Prejudice, and then to Decide, as the Evidence shall Direct. *Adieu!*



